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# Strengthening United Nation's Global Human Rights Policies against Exploitation by Multinational Corporations in South East Asia

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**Strengthening United Nation's Global Human Rights Policies against Exploitation by  
Multinational Corporations in South East Asia**

**by**

**Marcellius Smith**

**An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of**

**Bachelor of Science**

**in**

**University Honors**

**and**

**Philosophy**

**Thesis Adviser**

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**Portland State University**

**2014**

*"Strengthening United Nation's Global Human Rights Policies against Exploitation by Multinational Corporations in South East Asia"*

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## ABSTRACT AND INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will argue that multinational corporations have exploited the resources, endangered the environment and produced goods for profit at the expense of cheap labor by the inhabitants of less developed nations, specifically the people in South East Asia who sometimes work long hours in unsafe environmental conditions to maintain a decent living. I will also argue why it is important for all nation-states throughout the world have a moral obligation to strengthen the United Nation's policies against such exploitation through regulations and other means deemed acceptable by the world populace.

The premise will begin by explaining how and why the idea for global unification began and who were the benefactors to make it all possible. The second premise will discuss how the UN came into existences after the first failed attempt to unify the world. The third will go into more detail for creating global justice, human rights and what multinational corporation should do in terms of fair treatment to the populace of South East Asia. In the fourth premise I explain the importance of morality in human justice and what the world can do to make a difference for future generations. The fifth and final piece will be my thoughts on how we can all make a difference in this ideal of unifying the world together through efficient and moderate use of technology and moral understanding while at the same time respecting the individual rights and dignity not only just for humans, but all life in general.

With over seven billion people in the world and rising, at least two billion of the populace currently located in developing countries are dying from malnutrition and lack of clean drinking water. In addition, we as a society have already begun to experience depleting natural resources

and environmental concerns; it is time to establish policies to improve life conditions for all humans on this planet. This is the goal I hope we will achieve for all future generations to come.

## **PART ONE:**

### **The possible beginning for world unification in the early 20th Century**

The idea that seemed possible to unite countries around the world after the first world war was dubious at best. Certain factions within the global community such as Germany and the Ottoman Empire were ambitious enough to elevate political and military aggression in order to form their version on global dominance within the community but failed at the conclusion of the first world war. In response to damages and atrocities made from the result of the war, leading countries such as the United States, the British Empire and France, with the tacit approval of their neighbors, sought to make an example of them by instituting penalties of payment and restitution; thus deterring any possible opportunity of other “would be” aggressors against peaceful co-existence from repeating the same mistake. This resulted in the formation of the The League of Nations and the first proposed document ever written to form a viable world governing power the Covenant of the League of Nations.

The purpose of the League of Nations was to prevent wars. It recognized the cause and evils of wars which were in part, due to the manufacturing of armaments and munitions. The League of Nations strong objection to this kind of war profiting wanted to institute policies that would limit the use of exploiting resource materials. This form of exploitation, currently engineered by the military industrial complex, thrive on nation-state powers ambitions for global dominance. According to the covenants, if a nation for whatever reason come to a dispute with

another nation, the issue would be resolved through the legal and binding powers of international law. This can be achieved through the formation of an international court system. If an agreement cannot be reached, the league will pursue means, other than war, to resolve the situation that is considered just and right as soon as possible.

One intriguing aspect of the situation was that if a nation violated international law by instituting war, that nation would be subjected to financial and other economic means, such as embargoes and sanctions, to retribute losses incurred from such disparities. This included members of the league and non-members involved in the conflict. If for some other reason members and non-members were not able to settle disputes deemed acceptable for all parties involved, the League of Nations as a governing authority would find other additional means of settlement to resolve the issue without more hostilities between these nations. The document also mandated modern nations to take an interest in helping less developed nations come to the full realization of becoming a more civil and organized just society. By making this possible, members of the League of Nations would take less developed nations under their wing, if it so chooses, to bring them to the moral and right path of a civilized society based on colonial christian principles by the leaders of that sect.

In addition, the document also briefly addresses the early stages of humane treatment with regards to women and children in the form of labor as well as the control of diseases. (Yale Law, leagcov) This ideal of hope may have been somewhat naive and suffered minor illusions of grandeur for David Kennedy, (1997) states, "The philosophical controversies between naturalism and positivism, which after the relative triumph of positivism, gave way to the more pragmatic discipline we know in this century and, as a classical period, in which sovereignty and the state

were consolidated as the fundamental doctrinal and philosophical underpinnings for international law, only to be eroded, rejected and replaced by twentieth century international law.” (Pg. 101)

This passage suggests nation-states believed in the ideal of staying sovereign with the act to do what it pleases for the prosperity, continued development and growth for its nation and people; all other nations not in compliance with modern forms forms for progression will need to fend for themselves. But it is important to note that the establishment of international law does bring cooperation among nations in order to form a better society of continued prosperity and growth for all parties involved if they so choose; and this in the end will build a more viable international community.

One thing is certain, history was doomed to continue repeating past atrocities later in the future as long as self interest parties of nations continued to push for global control for its own selfish reasons. Because of colonial thirst for world power, we see this taken place from the progression of the industrial revolution along with the birth of fascist regimes hungering for global dominance once again which will be explained later in the paper. For now, it is important to note that international law was gaining support for David Kennedy, (1997) states, “The great innovations of twentieth century international law---a theoretical and doctrinal pragmatism, the dramatic expansion of international institutions and non-state actors, the doctrinal disestablishment of sovereignty and blurring of the boundaries between public and private or international and municipal law, decolonization and the engagement with politics, economics and sociology, not to ment the great normative projects of state responsibility, human rights, and so on---have begun largely as the projects of disciplinary progressives. (Pg. 102) This passage suggests the idea of developing an international law for the purposes of establishing coherent opportunities of global cooperation and community development in terms of human rights and



social responsibility was indeed important for the breaking down the walls as of political and national borders society has been put in place to grow as a global entity governed by the like-minded nations eager to advance human and social development. What was needed at that time period was the will to make the idea possible, if and only if nation-states set aside personal differences for the betterment of a global society as a whole.

So the question comes to this: What is necessary for a society to thrive in a world full of opportunities and perils, the suggestion in forming coexistence or cooperation with our neighboring countries? Are we able to coexist without impeding the social human rights of others in order to prosper, or is it more important to find common ground among all nations in order to cooperate for the betterment of human evolution in what we now call humanity? The result of the question listed above is too soon to tell for the world still has a very long way to go in order to evolve humanely. Unfortunately it may take a global calamity in order to peacefully bring nation-states together for the good of the planet.

International law is very important in this day and age because it provides a basis to enforce, if possible, governing rules among nation-states who wish to be considered being apart of the global community supporting international justice and cooperation. No country, according to the leaders of christian colonial power, on this planet will recognize a rogue colony not adhering to the human rights of others. The League of Nations was trying to provide a basis for the rule of law in a just and equitable early global society. David Kennedy, (1997) states the following, "In this century, international law has become a discipline of persuasion, its doctrines and institutions harnessed to narratives of progress toward the international, a place figured as both practical and humane." (Pg. 104) Nation-states sought the need to regulate and govern

countries that were found to be in violation of any international treaty as proposed by all other acceptable member nations. However there have been cases in the past where international law was violated due to personal and selfish reasons a nation-state deemed necessary to do so for its own sovereign purposes.

The question comes to mind on whether or not international law can truly be enforced by the League of Nations or any other governing authority as recognized by the said global entity. Nation-states are considered *single person* entities, it is believed they have a legal right to do what it pleases as a sovereign and no global authority has the right to interfere with its internal affairs. In summary fashion according to John Austin in the article, "The law obtaining between nations is not positive law: for every positive law is set by a given sovereign to a person or persons in a state of subjection to its author. As I have already stated, the law obtaining between nations is law (improperly so called) set by general opinion. The duties which it imposes are enforced by moral sanctions: by fear on the part of nations, or by fear on the part of sovereigns, of provoking general hostility, and incurring its probable evils, in case they shall violate maxims generally received and respected." (D.Kennedy, 1997 Pg. 111) So in other words, the law as given by any state, whether it is based on national or international intentions, can be political and is subjected to fallacy simply because it was invented by man; and man in of itself is subjected to fallacy. We find this to be the case with the rise of the infamous dictator and fascist supreme leaders Adolf Hitler of Germany, Benito Mussolini of Italy and the Emperor of Japan(though not a political leader) with the start of the Second World War.

The people of Germany were very grieved after the failed attempted to gain global power during the World War I and were legally subjected to pay restitutions in terms of economic fines and other obligations for international war crimes committed. The penalties imposed on the

sovereign nation of Germany were harsh for the sole purpose of setting an example to all other nations if they did not adhere to the international rule of law. This in turn motivated Adolf Hitler to bring people of Germany out from the clutches of international influences on its sovereign national and intern affairs; created a new world war and unspeakable acts of evil, such as genocide, genetic experimentation and weapons of mass destruction. According to David Kennedy (1997) on Austinian challenge to international law which states the following, "We have no foundation---law is as law does, tested by the behavior of nations; preoccupation with law's formal purity left it open to the challenge of irrelevance." (Pg. 112) Therefore, any sovereign nation that sees itself as independent and free from international influences will always challenge the global rule of law if it does not serve its purposes. However, allied powers such as the United States, Great Britain, Soviet Union and factions within France quickly changed that scenario finally ending World War II and helped form a new global entity that currently stands the test of time to this very day in what we now call the United Nations.

## **PART TWO:**

### **The United Nations Today**

It is quite apparent since the Second World War that revisions must be administered to member nations as soon as humanly possible; provided that failed nations of the Second World War do not intervene with the affairs of other nations interested in the development world peace and security. The United Nations has six governing bodies that works cohesively together for the best interest of all nations on planet earth. They are as follows: The General Assembly, a Security Council, an Economic and social council, a Trustee Council, an International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. Subsidiaries of the six governing bodies are authorized if necessary based on the UN Charter policies and rules.

For the most part, the General Assembly usually discuss concerns relating to international peace and security as well as human rights policies and any other matters of concern as regulated by the UN Charter. The Security Council on the other hand have a different role, and that's to enforce peace and security as deemed necessary by the UN Charter and its member nations to members and non-members around the world. (UN Website) As discussed previously on the issue regarding human rights, less developed countries were more of a stewardship approach by superior nations who felt obligated to bring the rest of the world to the high of peak civilized and modern world society. Unfortunately, that concept failed miserably with the commencement of World War 2 along with gross violations of human rights in the form of slave labor and genocide.

After the end of World War 2 and dissolution of the League of Nations, a new global organization was established, called the United Nations. Its resolve was to learn from and limit the failures of previous global entity while preventing wars from happening again. This time it would focus on human rights for every living human on the planet; which is why the charter of the United Nations was established. In addition to strengthening a stern focus for the rights of others, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights document became the foundation for UN's global objective towards peace and security. Other documents include UN treaties that help facilitate cooperation and fellowship among countries in the hope of common interest and friendship to sustain a global cohesive society. Unfortunately part of that includes multinational corporations' free trade agreement to invest in developing countries such as South East Asia who often times exploited those very resources for profit the UN is trying to protect.

The argument must now focus on why all countries throughout the world have an obligation to strengthen the UN's policies on global governance in terms of equal and equitable human rights not only in South East Asia, but for all individuals on the planet. As we have

entered the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we're still faced with issues of global injustice and negligence to sustain natural resources among nation states around the world. Given the current atrocities such as child labor, regional ethnic genocide, the suppression of women's rights, lack of proper food and water distribution, the list goes on, we are left to wonder what is the current purpose and mandate of the United Nations since the end of the cold war. According to the UN's website on Millennium Goals established in 2000, it states the following, "Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and global partnership for development by 2015." (UN Website). It is now 2014 and although these goals are noble, with one year left to go, we are no way near reaching what the United Nations has set out to do. Limited funding to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) approved by the UN maybe to blame, but it is quite apparent the bureaucracies of sovereign nation-states are slow to implement these policies that are acceptable for all involved. In some cases, internal issues such as ethnic, social, political and economic disparities can slow the process of improvement.

While multinational entities profit from such disparities by accumulating more wealth from the production of acquiring and manufacturing raw materials, the UN seems helpless to enforce the basic principles its member nations approved. The question comes to this, if nation-states approved to implement the Millennium Goals, don't they have a moral obligation to strengthen UN's policies on global governess? I not only agree in the affirmative but it is also the right thing to do, for the sake of humanity. Otherwise what is the point in having a global entity in the first place if Nation-states are not going to abide by its own policies it helped to create?

The best way to begin this process is readdressing the issue on what it means to acknowledge the basic principles of human rights for others. We start with Three key terms in

governing global policies and how it can be used: 1. A diplomatic effort to manage global problems after the cold war. The UN in 1995 hoped to become stronger in its influence across the world. Interested groups within the UN wanted to distinguish global governess from the actual word global government in order to dispel any potential adverse effect or reprisal from countries who may feel infringe on its right to function as a sovereign entity to govern themselves. The word global governess was broad in terms human rights advocacy and allowed groups within the organization to form an international criminal court as well as institute social responsibility to protect and aid others, thus making it more acceptable for all parties involved. 2. It would be theoretical in terms of an ideological perspective for the need to institute global cooperation and civilized society among the international community without one particular nation-state empirical control. The progressive liberal ideas in today's society will help humanity join together as a whole. 3. Tends to deal with the aspect of having a need for such an organization by real world strategies based on data collected around the globe. This particular need would address issues like maintaining awareness of environmental concerns.

The great aspect to this idea is that it does not need to have a central authority but true cooperation of nation-states working together for the common good. More importantly, it would protect the rights of indigenous population not fully represented in the international community system. According to William H. Meyer, (2012) it addresses the issue on not only defining what is considered Indigenous People but also the rights and prosperity for the population not fully represented. The Declaration of Indigenous Rights also addresses this issue. (Pgs. 327-347) It is important to note that there are, in my humble opinion, two seemingly different world views on how globalization can effectively become utilized. Multinational corporations interpret its contribution to the global community in terms of service and profitability to its shareholders, from a business point of view. In addition, the exploitation of abundant cheap labor force that

multinational corporations use in order to achieve maximum profit is very apparent. The majority of cheap labor can be found all over the world, particularly in developing regions such as Latin America, Africa, and South East Asia. The primary focus in this paper will be South East Asia for geographical purposes.

Although multinational corporations provide an invaluable investment and development to the developing country's economy, the tradeoff with regards to inhospitable working conditions, low wages and long hours can be devastating. (Mills, 1997). Also, it is important look at what the global community is doing to improve conditions for low wage earners in developing countries. The United Nations is in a unique position to institute stronger policies that will hold multinational corporations accountable for the conditions workers must endure in order to maintain productivity. However, the ideal of a unified global society may in fact be out of reach. This is due to the fact that multinational corporations thrive on exploiting segregated regions in conflict based on ethnicity, ideology, and scarcity of resources in order to gain maximum profit for its shareholders. So the need to maintain national pride and sovereignty for any nation-state has become a paramount directive thus legitimizing the personal identity and self-worth of that country.

Other issues arise regarding private global societal organizations such as Freemason's belief in the idea of instituting borderless, nationless communities under the umbrella of a single entity, have silently advocated for a strong emphasis in humanism as opposed to religious dogma dominated by world religions today. It is uncertain to know whether Freemasonry ideology could serve a purpose for helping humanity achieve its full potential. The disparities among social, economic and ethnic communities who thrive on separation and conflict in order to maintain elite status and superiority, unfortunately exists at the expense of others. (Friedman, 2013). However something needs to be done to address these issues in order to hold everyone

in the world accountable for the betterment of the global society as a whole. With the help of the United Nations as a humanitarian and resource protection authority, stronger policies can truly be implemented to hold all accountable; this ideal can be achieved once every human sets aside their personal differences and come together.

The next question that comes to mind is how can seven billion people in the world with different economic, cultural, social, language and religious theology come together without losing their personal identity and self worth while still embracing the ideal of globalization in order to evolve to the next level of a humane society? This is why all countries around the world more than ever need to embrace the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the basic foundation for human equality in order for it to work for the betterment of all humanity. According to the United Nations, this very important document that was drafted in 1947 by influential people of the world such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Charles Dukes, Alexandre Bogomolov, Dr. Peng-chun Chang, Rene Cassin, John P. Humphrey and other notable dignitaries. It was finally adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, right after the Second World War. The purpose of the document was to address grievous issues that took place throughout the world up to the ending point of the war as various atrocities became very evident at the cost of human life. World leaders of the newly established UN organization were not only concerned, but also resolute to make sure that a world war and particularly the exploitation in human suffering should never take place again ideally. The human rights law and its core principles aimed to protect all peoples, no matter where their national or ethnic identity lies.

This is pretty evident in the preamble and 30 articles within the document. The drafters of this document worked tirelessly to address every conceivable issue that arose at the time which is still prevalent even to this day; especially with regards to Articles 22 – 26 inclusively. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights particularly dealt with reasonable and safe working



conditions, reasonable hours of employment, and adequate health care in addition to reasonable education for all. (UN Website) We have the tools and know how to implement this wonderful and powerful document to save lives, we just have to have the will to make it happen which is why multinational corporations are in prime position as “corporate citizens” in a global community to take the necessary steps for building a better tomorrow, not just focusing on the bottom line in making a profit for its shareholders.

### **PART THREE:**

#### **World Justice and Human Rights, Global Business Stewardship and South East Asia**

Globalization is an idea that has existed in the modern era for over half a century, so the concept of world unification is nothing really new. But the ideal of achieving globalization is not what one would deem to be a credit worthy goal of pursuing. The discourse of bringing the world together in perfect harmony where all natural resources, labor and wealth would be evenly distributed, is a concept that hopefully can maintain world peace. That ideal of creating this type harmony is called neo-liberalism but doesn't exist today. What does exist according to Karl Marx's understanding is the exploitation and accumulation of wealth through corporate citizenship. It was also known as Imperialism and although this terminology rarely exists today, the concept is still being used. The current problem the world's having the realization in this day and age is ethnic elitism, racism, closed borders, tribal identity and nationalism.

Ever since westernized economic deregulation of the 80's, multinational corporation capitalists seized opportunities to exploit cheap labor, natural resources in less developed countries while harming the environment in the interest of *Free Trade Zone* agreements. Western countries such as the United States embellished on creating their version of

globalization through decentralized deregulation in order to maintain global economic dominance. But the capitalist's greed for constant expectation to maximize profits at the expense of others proves to be unstable. The evidence of this case happened with the recent economic crisis in 2008. (Friedman. 2013, 244-257) Whether the situation was designed or not is still out for debate. Another aspect of interpreting globalization from a Freemason's point of view is to unite a world free of nation-states with territorial borders; while at the same time promoting liberal humanism through the guidance of a philosophical unseen hand. However, the real significant influence for a possible globalized world is that of having a cosmopolitan approach to life. Its elitist ideology was focused on having a world that was fragmented and separate, thus ensuring an allegiance to self-identification.

Globalization discourse tries to identify current trends on why unification may or may not be possible given the current economic, social or traditional influences currently practiced in today's societies. Right now close to 3 billion people in their current state live at below poverty line with a median income ranging from 1.25 to 9.00 dollars a day to what we call developing countries. As mentioned above, multinational corporations have the power and ability to institute policies to create a better living environment for all BOPs. However, those corporations are somewhat biased in the way they help in terms of being environmentally friendly. Corporations, especially the well known multinational ones act as agents for their wealthy sovereign nations and in a sense continue to exploit resources from failed, unstable, and poverty stricken nations who rely on modest subsidies in order to survive.

What is missing at the moment is the will for the United Nations to enforce regulatory policies that look out for the well-being of these impoverished nations. But due to the conflict of interest with regards to business partnerships, country law deregulations and NGOs with different agendas, the process hold these companies accountable is a slow process to enforce.

Since corporations work as agents to their wealthier counterparts, they should take an active role for justice and equality to ensure peace and stability all across the globe if they wish to continue exploiting resources from these less developed and third world countries. The question of legitimacy comes to mind with regards to how multinational companies actually function within the international community. For the time being legitimate corporations worthy of recognition are powerful money making institutions that govern trade business activity which allow “other” corporations conduct trade and consumption of natural resources for profit.

This brings up the moral issue on what role should a multinational corporation take if they continue to function in this matter. If these so called “global” corporations act as agents of wealthier nations, shouldn't they also take an active role and responsibility in helping BoP populations to have basic livable needs in order to survive in a decent honorable manner? This would include clean water and sanitation, affordable healthcare and education, accesses to home ownership with a little income to live off and retire from. (Arnold. 2012, 125-143) These issues will need to be address in shareholders meetings, grassroots activism and government lobbying as we continue the pragmatic approach for helping the world in a more humane way. This is what I would describe as a moral legitimacy corporations must have in order to help the global population in general. However issues of human rights violations currently still take place in rural areas throughout developing nations. On top of that, most suffer from injustice, lack of clean drinking water and sanitation. This is due to outsider interests in acquiring resources to sustain maximum profit.

It has been estimated that over one billion people currently suffer from these disparities mentioned earlier. What needs to be done at this time is to create a common sense approach to sustainability and dignity for all earth's human population. An example of such disparity is developing nations where most of the women and young girls haul large gallons of water each

day for drinking and sanitation. Sometimes these places are located near areas most people defecate their biological waste in open areas where water is present. The result sometimes causes illness and disease.

An infrastructure must be built to not only facilitate clean drinking water near residential home communities as to reduce extended travel to gather needed resource, but also set up sanitation facilities to accommodate the removal of bio waste such as Orissa, of eastern India; an example of poverty stricken area in need of such infrastructure. The problem arises when a society with strong ties to the social caste system which dictates the lives of these people for so long, that it has become a common acceptance for people in Orissa to live because it is their fate.(Appel and Pless. 2012. 389-411) All people have the right to live in a dignified way that is conducive to the proper production of economic growth for everyone involved. That is what GV, a nongovernmental organization has set out to do.

On a different note, an increasing epidemic has taken place within Southeast Asia, specifically the rural areas of Thailand. Young women from the age of sixteen years and up have been lured into the immediate monetary gratifications of urban life which promises to bring a decent social status and independence. This yields an enticing opportunity to not only provide a morally substantial support for her rural family, but also enjoy the autonomous urban lifestyle few women in rural communities rarely experience. However, the glamor and fast pace lifestyle migrant working women participate in is not really all it cuts out to be.

Many young rural women migrate to Bangkok, a busy city that yields exciting opportunities, yearns to apart of a modern urban lifestyle. But the situation is less glamorous whereas the majority of the jobs available tend to be low-wage and status working long hours of production in marginalized environments. Some women tend to work 12 to 16 hours a day,

depending on the manufacturer's production demands, mostly textile companies and service jobs. And although these jobs are less than ideal for the middle and upper class individuals, migrant women accept these questionable conditions as opposed to still living in the rural community where no jobs that offer the kind of money to support their family are available and abundant. On top of that, rural women in farming communities are subject to hierarchical traditions in which the husband's dominate family controls her every move, may seem intolerable to endure.

Cities like Bangkok in Thailand have become a magnet for multinational corporations to invest in cheap labor; and as the country achieves the rank of rapid expansion of industrial economy with its abundant workforce, it also provides lower wages and few benefits to the migrant worker. Yet it does allow rural migrant women to become elevated from a farm, domesticated woman to a *Than Samay* (up-to-date) woman where she enjoys independence and autonomy. (Mills. 2013. 37-61) All the while multinational corporations amass huge profits at the expense and exploitation of cheap labor. The way these current trends are going, with the exception of humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations taking a stand to limit further exploitation, it seems the corporations have already won. The large sums of money businesses donate to politicians further corruption as they continue exploiting labor and rare resources while harming the environment. It is my belief that NGOs, along with grassroots activists and common people of the world would need to speak out openly to the United Nations to limit, if not stop further corruption and abuse currently taken place around the world. We have a moral obligation to strengthen the UN's policy for global governers.

## PART FOUR:

### **Morality and What it means to make a difference for all those involved**

Let's discuss something that is inherently important with the nature of humanity and how it relates to nations, corporations and groups as well as individuals. It is about the origins of morality culturally defined, but before we even go that far let's define what morality really is. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, (2011), it states, "normality to refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons." (website) I would also add, based on the website that it can include the groups or organization like churches and the individual self. Therefore whenever a group of people with a common interest comes together, they develop a certain set of rules deemed acceptable to the group as a whole in which to follow by.

How is this unique characteristic possible to possess? Christopher Boehm stated the following on Darwin's meaning to Morality, (2012), "Gaining a conscience and hence a sense of morality was, in effect, an inevitable outcome if a species became sufficiently **smart** and socially **sympathetic** to reach the human level." (p. 7) I find this interesting because the statement is basically saying that if a person, we will consider a human for the time being, has the capability to reason, have the ability to *listen to the still small voice* knowing right from wrong, as well be able to discern to do what is right for the benefit of society as a whole, that person has evolved from a state of selfishness to that of a conscious being; thus morality comes into view.

Deep down, we as humans are considered one of the most competitively based, selfish, animalistic human beings, with only the concern for our own self-worth and advancement. And yet we also have an innate capability to "feel" a sense of shame, embarrassment, or sympathy for not only ourselves, but for others, whether they are kin or not, as well. Darwin was very

much curious as to ponder the idea of when did the unique trait or characteristic first originate. This is known as altruism. Christopher Boehm (2012), states, “‘Altruism’ means being genetically generous to anybody at all, including kin;” (p. 9) Sometime we help our kin, other times we do not and yet we help others not closely related to us. It will depend on the situation taken place between that individual and the person affected; as long as it does not in some way disable the generous person’s well-being.

We may not always help one person in particular, even members of our own family; but if it helps more people in the long run, sacrifices will be made to ensure the continuation of humanity. Do animals also possess this unique characteristic as well? The answer to that question is arbitrary. We can see that domesticated animals, such as dogs, have the ability to appear sad and submissive at times but that may only mean dogs can manipulate the outward appearances to the beholder.

In addition, the owner must impose consequences on the dog the moment it transgressed, otherwise the animal would “feel” it was being treated unfairly. However, according to Franz de Waal of Ted Talk, animals such as the chimpanzee, bonobos and other apes to name a few, also shared human characteristics like Empathy, Pro-social Tendencies, as well as Reciprocity and Fairness. (youtube link) What I found to be pretty interesting was the fact that chimpanzees were able to express a sense of resentment and protest if not treated or rewarded fairly in Waal’s experiment. It also would suggest that those same animals could express a feeling of self-interest and freeloading, if given the opportunity to exploit the situation at hand. Since we are closely related to the chimpanzee, bonobo and ape, it is amazing to see how our innate characteristic abilities, such as altruism, allows us to develop a sense of moral value. These unique characteristics allow us to move onto the next form of human evolutionary state by reaching out for the well-being of those whom we come in contact with. This is what

makes us human; and although we still have a very very long way to go, I am pleased to have witnessed and experienced compassionate individuals who chose to help those in need.

However, there are a couple of critical issues with respect to reasoning and the idea of is/ought scenario I wish to discuss deeply. It has become quite apparent that the subject of one having morals can be a 'gray' area that might make the situation questionable indeed. It deals with the person's natural environment and how it relates to choices he/she makes, given their personal experiences. Take for instance, the article I shall briefly discuss regarding Hume's evaluation on the difficulties in having a set moral characteristic when it comes to reason. Human reasoning is based on the individual's certain point of view that direct challenges of morality in the actions they take that is acceptable within a societal environment. According to Hume in Moral Distinction not derived from reasoning, each person has perceptions based on sensory experiences and observations that allow them to make judgements on situations which may lead to the ultimate consequences of their choices.

However those choices may cloud a person's judgement because of the environmental and personal experiences in which they may or may not be accustomed to witnessing or partake based on their own personal upbringing. Hume states the following, "Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular. The rules of morality, therefore, are not conclusion of our reason." (David Hume 1739) Although morals allows us to invoke a certain level of conviction inside our personal character to commit certain acts through our own volition, reasoning does not, with respect to certain occasions, provide justification in performing or not performing those acts.

It is sometimes difficult to ascertain as to what may be pleasing for one person, may not always be the same to another. This again has something to do with the cultural environment in



which they live that determines whether the actions an individual performs are considered right or wrong; based on our perceptions of what life is or ought to be. But how is this possible? According to Falk, "Moral Distinctions are made in calling things good, or bad, praiseworthy, virtuous or vicious, laudable or contemptible, amiable or odious, entitled or not entitled to our regard, approbation, esteem." (W.D. Falk 1976) So we know from this point that it is our personal convictions and experiences that defines an individual's moral character which causes them to become passionate, relating to issues that affect all those whom they come in contact a great deal in society. They later create reasons, however unnecessary, objectionable or unobjectionable to justify those actions. This beckons the question, is it possible to have a personality of indifference while performing a moral or ethical act? It is my assumption that Hume would think the situation would be impossible as it may be difficult to commit a moral act without having, at the very least, a minimal passionate personality to do what they may consider to be right. These certain codes of conduct can be dictated by a well developed society that created them. In addition, this gives a certain amount of accountability to the individual since it defines his or her character ability as well as personal self worth.

However, according to societies deemed not acceptable by colonial western reasoning, there are unfortunate cases in some remote societal areas in the world that feel it is justifiably okay for a human being to cannibalize another human, or that incest is perfectly normal and culturally justified like countries in the Middle East, certain countries in Africa or aboriginal areas of Australia. I firmly disagree with these two situations and consider them not to be moral agents in a modernized ethnocentric world. This particular issue has really ignited something inside of me regarding the motivation of people's action to make a difference in either someone's life or the lives of others surrounding them in a society that seems to be bent on doing what is best for themselves and not the welfare of others. It has become a furiously debated dialogue, in terms

of what we would consider that the moral facts are in doing what is right, and even if this is something we ought to do. Would we consider this morally acceptable?

I wish to turn my attention to an article by Terence Cuneo in one particular situation regarding office employees and their association among peers of like minded individuals while those, who do not fit in, tend to shun off, if that individual was considered “socially unacceptable”. We will consider this scenario to that of developed and less nations around the world. According to Cuneo, an example would be the case of Sam and Margaret work in the same corporate environment with other office employees. Except for Margaret, most of the office workers tend to get along very well. Margaret, however, is seen as a person who stands out from the rest by being standoffish and unreasonably difficult to work with. Then one day, Margaret becomes very reserved and doesn’t interact with anyone.

While most the employees in the office see this as a welcome sigh of relief not having to deal with personality issues with Margaret, Sam on the other hand finds this situation troubling and tries to reach out to her. He soon discovers Margaret is having personal issues outside of work and tries to help out anyway possible. (Cuneo 2006) An Ethics class I have recently taken debated this particular motivation Sam displayed, may have been self serving but it was clear his concern for her well-being and unspoken compassion, wanted to reach out and help her. Terence Cuneo states, “Sam’s behavior, then is plausibly thought of as the product of the coordinated manifestation of various aspects of the particular ways in which he instantiates the virtues of compassion.” (Cuneo 2006) What gets me is if we humans indeed have this moral compass to do what is right, why did the other employees did not activate this sense of compassion as Sam did in Margarets time of need? Why were they content on seeing her “suffer” the infliction of her life alone. I was very moved by the selfless act heroism Sam displayed in comforting her; even though she tried his patience from time to time, he did not give

up in doing what was right.

Another topic I wish to discuss deals with Moral Relativism Defended. This topic in particular is very confusing to say the least for it suggests that inner moral accountability may take precedence over universal moral accountability. While it is understandable that certain actions we take may come into account at the discretion of our personal beliefs and convictions; whether we have the means or capability to do what is right or view things in a manner that should or ought to be universally moral acceptable can sometime be arbitrary. It does not negate our responsibility to do what is universally acceptable or right based on society's social rules of behavior.

But how can we judge these things when it is difficult to discern what is morally superior, whether relativism or universal? Gilbert Harman states in one particular situation, "Inner Judgement must have two important characteristics. First, they imply that the agent has reason to do something. Second, the speaker in some sense, endorses these reasons and supposes that the audiences endorses them." (Harman 1975) In this regard, the case with Hitler and his "evil" actions that caused a certain group of people to suffer under his reign is a prime example for this particular scenario.

According to Herman and the Ethics class, the discussion centered on whether or not a speaker should or should not categorize Hitler's actions for fear the words describing his deeds would be viewed weak. (Harman 1975) It is universally true what he did was unforgivable, which is why he was classified as an evil person. But on the flip side to this situation, let's say that Hitler did not commit those atrocities with regards to the Jewish people, and that he carried out the actions most world powers have done in the past, say for instance Rome; would the people of the world still have spoken out against him or would they have allow him to expand his

ideology for world domination? Would there be an inner judgement that dictates what we should or ought to do, or even say something for that matter, if Hitler did not endorse cruelty and genocide? In all reality, no one knows but there must be a moral compass to take a stand and do what is right not only countries located in SE Asia but all parties involved; which must include strengthening the United Nations policies on global governance.

## **PART FIVE:**

### **Final thoughts on moral obligation for individuals and nations**

There have been recent surges of anti-globalization movements taking place through many parts of the world, especially the United States. As global communication, through the use of internet and other satellite technologies continues to increase, most but not all people are becoming very much aware the dangers of having a centralized authority that would regulate social and cultural traditions most enjoy today. On top that, multinational corporations have increasingly dominated and cornered the market of practically most vital commodities consumers come to depend on each day as well. These range from acquiring water rights, patenting seeds, research and development of modified genetically engineered foods, commercial fishing to controlling the mass production of precious metals and the financial market systems. Paul M. Sweezy (1997) states the following, "Monopolization has contradictory consequences: on the one hand it generates a swelling flow of profits, on the other it reduces the demand for additional investment in increasingly controlled markets: more and more profits, fewer and fewer profitable investment opportunities, a receipt for slowing down capital accumulation and therefore economic growth which is powered by capital accumulation." (Pg. 3) The situation has become very evident, particularly in the United States where the need to be

self-reliant, patriotic nationalism and encouraging entrepreneurship in local communities has increased in the last two decades since 2001 and the Middle Eastern Gulf War.

There seems to be a fear that personal liberties were being taken away by the government with the creation of Homeland Security and the consolidation of intergovernmental agencies. As stated in Sweezy's comments, multinational corporations have seized the opportunity to expand and centralized world markets for its profitable use, thus exploiting resources in failed nation-states in order to increase maximum profits. Local small to midsized companies that provide those same goods and services are forced to either sell off or close down due to the high competition of their conglomerates or lack of investment support opportunities from outside sources.

All of this has inflamed local resistance which created fundamentalistic idealism of liberty and sovereignty from all that their way of life. Anthony Giddens (2002) states, "Whether in the shape of the American religious right, or Islamic movements, the fundamentalists are vociferous defenders of the traditional family, and hostile to the attempts of women to break away from their traditional social and cultural roles." (Pg. XIII) Since the election of the first African-Caucasian American (a multiracial) President, along with recent legislative changes for the recognition of same sex marriages, the appointment of the first female latina supreme court justice, the implementation of national healthcare which has now been mandated by law and increased regulation on gun control, fundamentalistic organizations such as the national tea party under the guise of the republican party, the National Rifle Association and others have been working very hard to limit the continuation of rapid change in America. This also applies to other countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, even modern countries currently resisting rapid change to same sex

marriages or recognition, women's as well as gay and lesbian human rights. In addition, the Middle East itself is going through a profound change to become a secularized society with the recent mass demonstrations or civil war in other countries within the region.

There was a discussion made between myself and a federal employee (name withheld for privacy reasons) that globalization was at best, delusion of grandeur because other nations such as Russia or China for that matter would never subject themselves in relinquishing their sovereign liberty to the full authority of the United Nations; if anything, they would exploit their own geopolitical influence in the hopes of gaining global domination. Anthony Giddens (2002) states, "Intensifying globalisation has radically altered the nature of nation-states, and their modes of relating to each other, especially the industrial nations" (Pg. XIV) One thing that really caught my interest was the ideal that established nations, whether developing or already developed are negating full recognition of the indigenous inhabitants around the world.

Although we see quite a bit of atrocities taking place within mainstream society, little is being done to address the issue to defend underrepresented indigenous populations. They have long cultivated, with admiration I might add, nurtured with respect to their rightful land of inheritance and nature, but are constantly in contentious negotiations with post-colonial occupation.

And while they continue to endure the process of "Recovery from Discovery" (a term used to explain in how they are recovering from the ills of colonial discovery by what they call invading occupiers), their delegational representation within the United Nations, is minimal at best. Robert H. Wade (2004) states in summary, "Over the past 20 years or so India, China,

and the rest of East Asia, experienced fast economic growth and falls in the poverty rate, Latin America stagnated, the former Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa regressed. But what are the net trends? The neoliberal argument says that world poverty and income inequality fell over the past two decades for the first time in more than a century and a half, thanks to the rising density of economic integration across national borders. The evidence therefore confirms that globalization in the context of the world economic regime in place since the end of Bretton Woods generates more “mutual benefit” than “conflicting interests.” (Pgs 567-589) I am using this summarized quote because it has been classified as undocumented proof and therefore will be used only as a theoretical or philosophical base. It is quite apparent to me that as long as hegemony nation-states continues to take advantage of resources from less-developed nations, with the help of private militarized corporations, progress will regress all because of state institutionalized fear.

It is my opinion that fear is what keeps people, groups and nations apart from coming together and it is that fear will no doubt continue to dominate the way in how we live, consume and work. Although there are few of us who believe in the true of bringing together a globalized community, we have a long long way to go. It is also the belief that we as a globalized people can move on the next form of evolutions and bring all peoples together; they will not need to worry of losing their cultural, political, religious or social identity, all they have to do is embrace the fundamental basic process of the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights and everything else will follow. The process can begin by reaching out to other cultures around the world to learn and express appreciation for who they are and what they do.

While we do not have to condone certain activities practiced by the society in which they

live, we can try to understand and show more empathy to why they perform those practices. The only exception will be perform a cease and desist of gross human violations in the oppression for all people which includes women and children. All have an equal right to prosper and grow for the betterment of society. We also have a moral obligation to take care of our natural environment and learn to balance in the consumption of natural resource in order to allow the planet to rejuvenate itself for all future generations. This can be done by learning from the tried and true practices of indigenous populations that have learned to live off the land and nature in all moderation. We can also embrace technological advances to improve efficiency while at the same time respecting and protecting the natural environment. Humans have always had the means and capability to do the right thing, they only need the will to make it possible.

Boehm understands the human morality was based upon a certain set of human societal genetic rules we intuitively try to adhere to when it comes to integrating within that society; whether it is a band of hunter/gathers, a tribesman, nations, even the world community. We do possess altruism which allows humans to gain a certain respectable level of sympathy to our fellow species. However, this innate altruistic quality should be more abundant in ways that would ultimately benefit all that live on this planet. It is my hope that every human being on this planet will want to do what is morally right and necessary for not only themselves, but those around them to reap the benefits of prosperity. Christopher Boehm (2012), states the following, "Band members understand that if they are to better reap the benefits of group cooperation, they'll need to apply their local version of the Golden Rule manipulatively, as a refined type of social pressure designed to bring out the best in human nature." (Pg. 10) Now the "Golden Rule" means treating others well as we want them to treat us in kind. When it comes to instinctive survival, we tend to take care of ourselves but at least we have the capability to help others in



need.

Similarly, we need to account how human beings have always been curious about the nature of their moral philosophy and where it originally came from. According to Christopher Boehm (2012), “This widespread human concern with origins is found among our LPA foragers, so it’s safe to say that this ‘around-the-campfire,’ mythological approach extends far backward in time.” (Pg. 316) The Bible, the Torah, and the Koran gives one account of such an elaborate story that mainstream Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faith practitioners enjoy today. But it doesn’t need stop there, it also applies to other regional or world religions as well. Now the evolution of morality would have to come in terms of how an individual’s actions relate to the approval of society and how it applies to his own well-being.

We are judged by our actions, and those actions will either gain the acceptance or displeasure to society according to what is socially acceptable. In this regard, Christopher Boehm (2012) feels ‘the mechanisms that have been active in the evolutionary development of shame, virtue, extrafamilial generosity, and moralistic group social control’ is the reason for its cause that defines human moral characteristics. (Pg. 323) We feel a sense of encouragement, shame or inspiration whenever we commit an act that will either benefit or discourage society. And that society, in turn, will reward or punish for any action or deed that was done with or without intentional character.

Although we can never know the true intention of a person’s character internally, we can however be able to judge the character of his intentions by the actions he performs, or bodily gestures expressed by his personality. It should be noted however this form of characteristic

stems from the emotions that make us who we are as human beings. For it is by our emotions that allows governing authorities or dominate group societies can give reference of judgement to discern whether the individual is sincere in their actions or not. In addition, it is very difficult to be sympathetic to a person who does not display any feelings of emotion or indifferent for the actions they have caused.

In regards to the pleistocene human nature as Boehm puts it, we are at a point where it is important to move on the the next stage of human social evolution where it is vital to learn from our past actions and deeds in order to form a cohesive world authority. It is my opinion, moral theorist believe we can come to the next stage of cooperation where all who participate in the development of a cohesive, orderly society will, in the end, benefit all for generations to come. However it is true that there are a few powerful nations in the world who still believe a sovereign and economic entity should have control over those who do not. We have seen this in years past where dictators have tried to take advantage of the situation in order to get more than received and controlling others not apart their social appeal.

There must be checks and balances for equally sharing world power to all who wish to participate for the benefit of humanity. We have a long way to go and there is no guarantee that all nations will look out for the best interest of the world in particular to come together under moral ideology. To expound on what Boehm has stated about the possibility of external guidance, it would take an act of god to make a world authority possible. But at least, not counting the nuclear proliferation and military power, we are working towards a global free trade agreement to that allows us to become more interdependent of one another and continue with the survival of the human race. The United Nations has a prime opportunity to take advantage,

with the help of all nations under the treaty, to help make the world a better place, not only for the current generation but many generations to come. It is for this very reason alone that all countries, developed and less developed, represented and less represented, wealthy and less wealthy have a moral obligation to strengthen policies for global citizenship and governance of the United Nations; that will yield a stronger humanity which will allow us to move to the next stage of human evolution.

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